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EDU318- Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education

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*Reading with Meaning* by Debbie Miller—Midterm

### **Literacy Attendance**

Literacy attendance is an educational, yet fun way for the teacher to take attendance and for the students to actively participate. It allows the students to have the time to tell their fellow classmates what they read or how they liked their story. This gives the teacher time to take attendance but it also gives her time to figure out what the students are doing with literature at home and how they are using literature to further their education. Literacy attendance has many advantages, but I think the biggest advantage to literacy attendance is that the benefit that the teacher gets from hearing about what the students are doing. Also that it allows the students to share their accomplishments and maybe they will discuss a book that someone else is interested in and encourage them to read it as well. However, there are disadvantages to literacy attendance as well. The teacher may come across a child that did not read nor has nothing to share and if that child is the only child with nothing they will feel left out and maybe even embarrassed. Another disadvantage would be that it takes up a lot of time in the morning, especially if you ask every child to share something with you or with the class. Literacy attendance has its ups and downs, but overall I think it is a very good idea and very good way to get children involved and encourage them to read!

## **Chapter 1—Guiding Principles**

Gradual release of responsibility is learning how to do a certain task whether it is in a school setting or outside of the school environment, snowboarding, for example. The gradual release responsibility model is slowly building an individual up to doing or accomplishing a task on their own. First, you start off with teacher modeling where the teacher gives an explanation of the strategy and shows the students how it is done. Then, you move on to guided practice, where the teacher gradually gives the students more and more responsibility. The third step is independent practice which allows the learner to do the task on their own accompanied by feedback from the teacher or instructor. The last step to this model is application where the learner completes the task solely on their own or takes what they have learned and applies it to complete the task. For example, the gradual release of responsibility model can be used to learn how to snowboard. First, the snowboarding instructor would tell the students what to do, and then they would show them how to take what they were just told and apply it to the task at hand. Secondly, the students would take what they were taught and slowly begin reaching for their goal. The students would then do their independent work, meaning they would begin to snowboard and they would receive feedback from the instructor on how to make what they are doing better. Then finally, once the instructor thinks the students have what they need to succeed they set them out on their own to apply what they have learned to the task at hand.

## **Chapter 2—In September**

Before you can create any type of “culture for thinking” environment you must establish rapport and create the genuine relationships with your students. One way to establish rapport with the students is to ask about their life outside of school. Ask the students how their soccer

game went or how their new baby brother or sister is doing at home. Listen to your students and hear what they have to say to each other. Listen in on what types of relationships they are building and point it out to the entire class if one student shows enormous care for another. If one student is down and another says something to cheer them up, point that out. Don't let the little things go unnoticed. Next, you must establish trust within your classroom. Let your students know that you are there to help them and that you care for each and every one of them. If a student has a new idea or a new way of doing something, trust that child and let them show you or even the class how they do something if it is easier for them. Maybe the other students will benefit from their findings, too. Trust your students to help one another and trust them to help you. Once these two main goals have been accomplished and once a classroom community has been established then your "culture for thinking" environment is well on its way to being complete.

### **Chapter 3—Readers' Workshop: Real Reading from the Start**

Procedures from Reading Workshop can be applied to classrooms with basal reading programs when the students have completed their reading and the activity that goes along with their reading for the day. Reading Workshop activities can be applied to reading of any kind at any time of the day. For example, singing can be used in a classroom with a basal reading program, but it can be done first thing in the morning before reading actually starts. The singing can be done during calendar time or during the morning free time when everyone is arriving. While using the basal reading program, Reading Workshop techniques such as post-it notes can be used. While reading the students can place post-it notes in their books, helping them to make connections allowing the questions from the basal program to be easier on the students.

The more connections they can make the more information they will have to answer the questions. Even though the reading program being used is scripted and gives assignments for the students, the teacher can still give the students different ways to work with what the program is giving them. Remember, ask for students opinions and requests to make them feel wanted even if their idea cannot be carried out at that exact moment. Stay on task with the basal, but stray away to make it more interesting and more interactive for the students.

#### **Chapter 4—Settling In**

I agree with Debbie when she says that she believes that decoding and strategies for comprehension should be taught side by side because if one cannot decode then one will not comprehend. I feel that students need to learn to decode before worrying about comprehension, but I believe that if you teach them side by side you can teach decoding and it will lead into better comprehension and understanding of a text. One topic leads into the other and if you can teach one without teaching it specifically to the child why not take full advantage of that. A child cannot be taught comprehension; they can only be taught ways to make comprehension easier for them. When learning to decode, if the child has an idea of what comprehension is, then the child can begin thinking about what they are reading as they begin to decode better. Decoding makes better readers and helps to make them more fluent as well. When the students can read fluently they can focus on comprehension, therefore, decoding leads to comprehension and many smaller aspects of reading. Teaching them side by side would not only make it easier for the teacher, but I believe it would make it more worthwhile for the students as well because they will not feel like reading has so many components. It will give them a feel that it all runs together and it will teach them that you can't do one without the other.

## **Chapter 5—Schema**

Schema is an individual's background knowledge. The knowledge used to make connections to new things they learn from what they already know. This relates directly to the teaching of reading because when children read and begin to comprehend, they will make connections to the reading allowing comprehension to come easier and making the text easier for them to understand. I know that schema is built based upon the prior knowledge you have already and what you learn that connects to what you already know. When you learn something new and can connect it to something you already know, then you can take that information and add it to your schema. After reading this chapter and recently doing research on schema, I feel that schema is very important to the individual and without your schema, comprehension is almost impossible because you have nothing to connect what you are learning about to. I believe that schema plays a large part in reading and I do not think high level reading would be existent if we had no schema because we would not be able to understand the text in a personal way.

## **Chapter 6—Creating Mental Images**

Mental Images are very creative; however, I often do not have mental images. When I read, I usually am just reading because I have to. Very rarely do I read for enjoyment because either I don't have time, or I just can't find a good book that I am interested in. I try to visualize classrooms that are described in texts that I read, but the images don't come naturally. The only time that I experience mental images is when I am reading a text that I enjoy and I come across a part that I can relate to, but then my mental images are not creating based on the book, but based on my own personal experiences. I wish I could create more mental images, but if I have no interest in what I am reading then I don't bother because I don't try and make connections.

## **Chapter 7—Digging Deeper**

Often times teachers have children read a story and then to gather what the children learned from their reading they are to answer numerous questions or complete many pages of “neatly stapled stacks of worksheets.” There are many alternatives to those stapled stacks of worksheets. Some activities that teachers thought they could have the children complete were book jackets, drawing pictures of their favorite parts, making puppets or even rewriting the ending. However, teachers later realized that even though their students loved what they were doing, they needed to be doing something more educational. Teachers realized it was taking the students ten minutes to read their book, but they were spending twenty minutes to a half hour creating their projects. The teachers now have their students using sticky notes to keep track of their thoughts or connections they make while reading. They complete notebook entries because they can be completed at school or at home. They are also good because they can be used for written and artistic responses. These notebooks can also be used as a show and tell or for read alouds and the children can show off their drawings or read aloud what they have written to the class. They also introduced two column notes where students can make comments about things such as, I learned or I wonder when reading a selection. The teachers also have the students work with venn diagrams, webs and story maps: all ways to keep track of ideas or important things you have read and to visually see connections being made throughout the story. In my opinion, these are all great ways for students to follow-up a story or even for them to use when actively reading aloud or to themselves. These activities are educational, but also child engaging at the same time.

## **Chapter 8—Inferring**

Inferring is reading between the lines, being able to figure out what is going to happen by what is being said, making prediction. Inferring is very important for higher level learning because it leading to better comprehension. If students can think about what is being said and make connections to figure out what will be happening next or what kind of environment the characters might be in, they will be able to comprehend the selection so much more. Students struggle if they can't comprehend and all of the small pieces such as inferring lead up to comprehension. Inferring is also important for higher level learning because it allows them to learn things they did not know, maybe about themselves or a new topic of interest. Inferring allows students to do so much more with a text because they can understand it more than what they could if they were just simply reading the text to say they were done. Inferring can change the way a child looks at reading, but it can also give them a better understanding of not only a new topic of interest, but of themselves.

## **Chapter 9—Asking Questions**

Questioning my seem easy, but for children it is actually a hard concept to grasp. Children think that their answers have to come from one source, for example the reading, and come only from that source. They do not realize that the answers can be found in the text, between the lines, in using their background knowledge or outside sources. Teachers need to understand that when teaching children to use questioning they need to give them examples. They also need to give them open ended prompts because it allows the students to be more open with their answers and get more creative. It does not make them feel like there is one right answer and one right answer only, but that they can answer the question how they please and

how they feel is the best suitable answer. Teachers need to understand that when teaching children to use questioning to develop reading skills that it is important to ask yourself questions before you are able to answer questions. The teacher should be encouraging students to answer questions before, during and after their reading is done to help further their understanding of the reading. They need to encourage students to also ask questions when they don't understand or when they feel they need help. Questioning is done by the students, but also answered by the students. Teachers need to understand that all students are going to have different questions and that questioning should be student driven.

## **Chapter 10—Determining Importance in Nonfiction**

Nonfiction is organized around topics rather than characters, problems, settings, and the beginning-middle-and end of a story. The features of nonfiction literature are important, therefore, they are important for the students to be able to recognize and use. Teachers can help children recognize the features of nonfiction by giving them a list of all of the features so that the students are able to recognize what they are even supposed to be looking for. The teacher could give the students a handout of the list on page 149 of Miller's text. This would then allow the students to see exactly what the features are and allow them to understand what they are to be looking for when reading nonfiction. After passing out the list of features the teacher can then choose a feature a week or even two weeks and focus on that feature. They suggest giving the students numerous texts and having them find the feature of study and point it out so they get the feel for what they are to be looking for. This allows the children to become aware of the features, but also teaches them how they are used in different nonfiction texts.



## **Chapter 11—Synthesizing Information**

The writing in this chapter is very comparable to the writing I am seeing in local schools. The students are working on complete sentences, but their spelling is the best they can do. They spell the words as they sound them out and spell them to the best of their ability. Some words are spelled very close to their actual spelling, just missing a letter or two. The letters missing are mostly silent letters in the word. However, the children's writing in this chapter seems to be more in depth and more thought out than the writing I am seeing in the local schools. I feel as though the students write what they feel should be written and don't feel the need to elaborate. I haven't really seen a lot of synthesizing in my field placement. I have seen the students answer many questions and create many story maps, but no synthesizing. I, however, look forward to seeing what the students can do once they begin to synthesize.